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Subject: Background Statement on Food Allocation

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Suggested Use: To be used as background material.

You've heard people say, when food shortages are mentioned: "The boys in the Army are getting it." Or--"Russia and Great Britain are getting it." You've heard it so often you've halfway begun to believe it yourself--even though, in your own case, you've had enough to eat.

So you've said to yourself: "Of course, our own armed forces must be fed--and fed well; they're our boys. We've got to provide food for the Russians, who did so well at Stalingrad and Sevastopol and hundreds of other hard-to pronounce places. We've also got to help the British--remember what the RAF did in the Battle of Britain and what the Eighth Army did in Libya, Tunisia, and Sicily? There are other food needs that must be met--the Red Cross, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii. But, gee whiz--civilians must eat too, and how are they going to do a good war production job if the Government sends all the food out of the country?"

As a matter if fact, the Government is not sending all the food out of the country. Take your own case. You have had a little trouble getting beef sometimes, but how many times have you been unable to find meat? And granting, for the sake of argument, that you couldn't find meat of any kind, how much trouble have you had in finding cheese, or eggs, or beans--all proteins? Bananas have been scarce, but how about apples or oranges or grapefruit? Truth of the matter is, compared to the situation in Greece and Poland and Russia, civilians haven't had any "food shortages" here at all.

Complex System

This relatively happy state of affairs is partly owing to a complex but workable system of food allocation--a system of divvying up our total food supply in such a way that food will do a real war job. Food allocation is a responsibility of the Food Distribution Administration--a part of the War Food Administration.

To clarify this whole matter of food allocation, let's suppose that you had the job to do. How would you go about it--with the war effort always uppermost in your mind, remember? Well, you'd probably do about the same as the Food Distribution Administration--hereafter referred to as the FDA.

In the case of civilian, you'd probably say to yourself, "Figures compiled by the National Research Council show that people need so many calories, proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals to maintain health and efficiency. I'll translate those figures into terms of food and multiply by the number of civilians to be fed. That will give me the minimum food requirements that must be met. Moreover, where there are special needs, such as for infants, invalids, diabetics, and workers in heavy industries, those needs also must be met."

As for the armed forces--our own armed forces--you'd say: "This is a direct war requirement. The men in charge of feeding our soldiers, sailers, marines, and coast guardsmen have had a lot of experience in that line. They know what fighters need in the way of food and they know what stockpiles must be built up for future operations. So far as possible, I'll try to give them what they want."

When it comes to other demands on the food supply--from Russia, Great Britain, the Red Cross, etc., you'd say: "These are direct war needs, too. I'm going just as far as I can in furnishing them with the food they require. But they realize as well as I do that I can't meet all of their requirements--I haven't enough food, and if I did have, the shipping situation is so serious I probably couldn't get it all there anyway. I'll just have to do the very best I can."

There, very briefly--and perhaps too simply--are the basic considerations. Now, how does allocation work--in detail?

Executive Authority

Authority for making food allocations comes directly from the President. An order of the President directs the War Food Administration to allocate U. S. food to governmental agencies and for direct and indirect military, other governmental, civilian, and foreign needs.

The War Food Administrator has delegated authority to the Director of FDA (1) to assemble food requests from all "claimant agencies," (2) to adjust them in terms of supplies, and (3) to resolve conflicts where possible. These "claimant agencies," when added together, represent the demand for U. S. food supplies today.

The Army, Navy, and Marine Corps have a shokesman each. The Civilian Food Requirements Branch of FDA makes claims based on U. S. civilian requirements. Claims of American territorial possessions--Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico--arrive through the Department of the Interior. The Lend-Lease Administration acts for the various nations, including Great Britain, the USSR, and the Fighting French, which are eligible to receive food from us under the Lend-Lease Act. The Office of Economic Warfare (formerly the Board of Economic Warfare) represents friendly nations not eligible for Lend-Lease aid. The Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation makes claims for peoples liberated and expected to be liberated. In addition, there are the State Department, the American Red Cross, the War Shipping Board, and the Veterans Administration.

These agencies present claims for both current and future needs in two

ways: First, for a series of four 3-month periods, and, second, on an annual basis for 2 years in advance. They also present statements of justification for their claims.

With all the claims in, the Supply Estimate Committees swing into action--because it is one thing to have an order for food on your desk and another thing to find out whether you can meet that order. These committees, with all the information-collecting means of the U. S. Department of Agriculture at their disposal, are composed of commodity experts from the War Food Administration and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

The commodity experts check up on every available source of information for data on supplies available or in prospect. They check on estimates of crop production, they examine import figures, they look into the amount of food in storage, they take into consideration the number of meat animals on ranges or in feed lots, they make allowances for possible extremes of weather. Then FDA makes a trial balance. That is, requirements for each commodity are set down against the estimated supply.

If the supply is substantially larger than requirements, there is, of course, no need for an allocation of that commodity. But if the supply is short, each claimant is asked to re-justify his food claims according to urgency and war importance. Oftentimes the FDA suggests more plentiful foods as substitutes, but sometimes the only solution is to pare the request or cut it out entirely.

Review Balance Sheets

The next step is to review the trial balance sheets, and adjustments, with the Inter-Agency Commodity Committees. These committees, one for each commodity group, are composed of commodity specialists from the various claimant agencies. Each of them is a specialist, not only in a commodity, but also in need of his particular agency for that commodity. Acting as consultants, the members exchange further information about the claimants' relative needs. At this point the claimants usually agree. If not, objecting claimants may send their claims and supporting statements to the Director of FDA.

He reviews the tentative allocations with the Inter-Agency Food Allocations Committee, of which he is chairman. This committee is composed of representatives, of all claimants, and also of the War Production Board, the Office of Price Administration, and the Bureau of the Budget. The tentative allocations are well on their way.

The Combined Food Board, representing the United Kingdom and the United States, now takes a hand. Set up by the President and Mr. Churchill, this board considers ghe food resources of the United Nations as a common pool and recommends the way in which this pool should be used to further the war effort.

When U. S. food allocations are a part of an international allocation that the Combined Food Board is considering, the director of the FDA, after advice from his Inter-Agency Food Allocations Committee, instructs the U. S. representatives on the International Commodity Committees of the Combined Food

Board as to the American position. In making recommendations to the War Food Administrator, the Director of FDA takes into account the recommendations of both the International Commodity Committee and his own Inter-Agency Food Allocations Committee.

Just before the allocations are made, the War Food Administrator consults the Food Advisory Committee. With the Secretary of Agriculture as chairman, this committee is composed of representatives of the War Food Administration; the Departments of Agriculture, State, War, and Navy; the Lend-Lease Administration; the Office of Economic Warfare; and the War Production Board. These committeemen examine each proposed allocation and ask the question: "Is this good U. S. policy?" Their function, based on a broad grasp of the aims of the agencies they represent, is advisory.

Evaporated Milk

Recently the Food Advisory Committee passed judgement on the way total allocable supplies of evaporated milk had been "whacked up." Out of 3,002,400,000 pounds, the claimant for civilians--the FDA--estimated that about 43 percent or 1,305,000,000 pounds would be required for consumption by U. S. civilians. In making this request, the FDA backed up its claim by showing how much evaporated milk would be required for infants and how much by adults to maintain good health. The armed forces presented claims for 35 percent of the total or 1,056,000,000 pounds and produced figures showing the number of men under arms and the need for building up stockpiles. Finally other claimants--including the Lend-Lease Administration, the Office of Economic Warfare, and the Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation--requested 21 percent or 616,400,000 pounds and explained why it was needed. About 1 percent or 25,000,000 pounds was left for a contingency reserve. The evaporated milk allocation went through a-sailing.

After this full consideration, the War Food Administrator makes the allocations. Allocations are made for 12 months in advance, but since they are determined from estimated production and supplies, they are made "firm" only quarter by quarter. All firm allocations must be met. Every 3 months the supply is re-estimated, and allocations are squared with expected food income.

Allocating food is a continual process of dividing the food on hand and in prospect among the several wartime claimants for it. Allocations are subject to change as military, supply, and other conditions require. That is one big reason why the wartime food situation will never be stable and completely predictable.

But allocation--despite its seemingly interminable committees--is working. Food is doing a complete wartime job.

As for civilians, they have fared very well. Considering the period 1934-39 as 100, per capita food consumption in 1943 is estimated at 104. This compares with 108 in 1942; 111 in 1941; and 105 in 1940. It isn't a feast compared with recent years, but neither is it a famine.

Here is the way some of the individual food allocations shape up during the period from July 1, 1943 to July 1, 1944: Meat: About 63 out of every 100 pounds--which allows a continuation of the civilians meat ration at about the present level. Eggs: 7 out of every 10 produced. Canned vegetables, including soups: 70 out of every 100 cans. Canned fruits and juices: 53 out of every 100 cans. Dry edible beans: 50 out of every 100 bags. Dry edible peas: 39 out of every 100 bags. Butter: 8 out of every 10 pounds. Cheese: 5-1/2 out of every 10 pounds. Evaporated milk: 43 out of every 100 cans.

That is not bad.

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